

MOTHER-IN-LAW AND FATHER-IN-LAW TABOO

In former times the mother-in-law and father-in-law taboo was in full force. No man was allowed to talk directly to his mother-in-law or to look at her, and the same rule held with regard to the attitude of a woman toward her father-in-law. Even accidental meetings of these relatives, as on the road, were attended with great embarrassment. The author never learned of any way in which either the mother-in-law or the father-in-law taboo could be relaxed even temporarily, much less done away with entirely.

PUBERTY CUSTOMS

From the age of five, children, male and female, were taught the customs of their ancestors in a series of talks always delivered by an elderly male relative, perhaps the father. The specific training differed, of course, for boys and girls and for individuals. Personal training ceased at the age of puberty, when all, both boys and girls, were sent out to fast. For boys this fasting constituted the only puberty rite. After their faces had been blackened with charcoal they were sent to some neighboring hill with the injunction not to return till dawn. Gradually they would be sent out for two, then three, nights; if after that trial they were not blessed they would be advised either to desist entirely or exhorted to fast until they were blessed, no matter how long the time required to secure the desired result. While fasting the boys and girls used the following formula:

Waxop' inixjiwina	hina'djire na'dje'je	vahadjax.
Spirits	am I likely to be blessed?	that is why I am praying.

One old Indian informed the author that in former times the young boys and girls were offered either bread or charcoal for their fast. If they took the charcoal, well and good; but if they took the bread, they were unceremoniously kicked out of the house and the charcoal was thrown after them. From the other statements of this informant one might gather that the young boys and girls generally took the bread, because, he said, after they had been kicked out, they would always resolve to go to the wilderness (in that way running the risk of being captured or killed by an enemy), in order to spite their parents. My informant was of the opinion that the parents purposely treated their children roughly, so that they might feel all the more miserable while fasting and thus pray all the more intensely.

A faster is always told to be careful as to what kind of spirits bless him, as he might be blessed by a bad spirit. Therefore a faster's blessings are always reviewed by the elders. J.'s old grandmother used to call the children in at dusk, as the evil spirits are around then.

- 831 All boys do not seem to have approached the ordeal of fasting with
 785 the proper religious feeling. One instance in particular showed any-
 787 thing but a reverent attitude; this is so amusing that it is here
 given in the exact words of the Indian:

When I was a young boy, my folks made me fast together with a boy named
 Madudjika. We were supposed to go to the hills and cry until the spirits blessed us.
 However, whenever we looked at each other and at our charcoal-blackened faces we
 could not refrain from bursting out laughing. Whenever we made up our minds to
 cry, something or other would induce us to look at each other and the laughing would
 begin all over again. When the time for our return to the house came, we didn't
 present the slightest indication of having cried, so we took some saliva and made long
 streaks on our faces.

Young girls and women are also encouraged to fast to obtain the
 war honors.

- 831 Menstrual lodges.—Fasting at puberty by girls was inseparably con-
 785 nected with their retirement to menstrual lodges. Sometimes there
 was only one girl in each menstrual lodge, sometimes there were as
 many as three. From the time of her first menstrual flow to her
 climacteric a woman retired to a menstrual lodge every month for
 a few days. An excellent account of Winnebago customs in this
 841 respect was obtained in a text from a male informant, and, although
 somewhat discursive, it is given in full here:

As soon as a woman begins to have her menstrual flow she has to retire to a menstrual
 lodge and to be careful never to come in contact with any sacred objects. If she did,
 those objects would all lose their power. Everything that is holy would immediately
 lose its power if a menstruating woman came near it. A holy woman or a holy man
 or even a holy child would be affected by the proximity of a menstruating woman.
 Their holy condition would immediately disappear. In a similar way, if food were
 served to a sick person from the same dish used for a menstruating woman the sick
 person would become far sicker.

The food for a menstruating person is always cooked separately. Special dishes
 are used and special precautions are made.

If a person possessed any medicines, they would lose all their power if a men-
 struating woman came in contact with them. If any person should enter a men-
 struating lodge, in after life, whenever he fasted, he would not be blessed by any spirit.
 However, there is one thing that a menstruating woman is afraid of, and that is the
 775 war bundle. These war bundles are kept in cedar [leaves?] mixed with medicine to
 prevent danger from just such a source. If a menstruating woman comes near a war
 bundle, her flow would increase and never cease, and after a while she would die,
 and only if the owner of the war bundle personally attends to her can she be cured.
 For that reason whenever a war bundle fast is being given a woman is very careful,
 and even if it is a few days before her menstrual flow she will not go.

* This explains what people tell me for some time—namely, the fact that although contact with a
 menstruating woman destroyed the efficacy of everything holy, in the case of the war bundle the reverse
 was true and the woman was destroyed. Many of the Indians who speak of this matter are so afraid to
 believe it was the war bundle that killed the woman. From this account, however, it is perfectly clear
 that it is not the war bundle at all that killed the woman, but the poison in which the war bundle was
 wrapped. The war bundle is therefore an exception to the general rule, and it is only on account of the
 serious consequences that would ensue in so many people from any impairment of its power, and the
 care taken to prevent this by surrounding it with special medicines, that it differs externally as an exception
 to the fatal effects of contact with a menstruating woman.

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limb.⁸⁶⁷ They will indeed like you very much if you obtain a limb, or, even better, two or three. If you do thus, wherever people boil an animal with a head⁵⁵⁴ you will always be able to eat.

If on account of your bravery you are permitted to tell of your war exploits during the Four Nights' Wake for the benefit of the soul of the deceased, do not try to add to your glory by exaggerating any exploit, for by so doing you will cause the soul to stumble on its journey to the spirit land.⁸⁶⁷ If you do this and add an untruth to the account of your war exploit, you will die soon after. The war spirits always hear you. Tell a little less. The old men say it is wise.⁷⁶⁵

My son, it is good to die in war. If you die in war, your soul will not be unconscious. You will have complete disposal of your soul and it will always be happy.⁷²¹ If you should ever desire to return to this earth and live here again, you will be able to do so. A second life as a human being you may live, or, if you prefer, as an inhabitant of the air (a bird) you may live, or you may roam the earth as an animal. Thus it is to him who dies in battle.⁷⁷⁵

My son, fast for an honorable place among your fellowmen. Fast so that when you are married you may have plenty of food; that you may be happy and that you may not have to worry about your children. If in your fastings you have a vision of your future home, the members of your family will be lacking in nothing during their life. Fast for the food that you may need. If you fast a sufficiently large number of times, when in after life you have children and they cry for food you will be able to offer a piece of deer or moose meat without any difficulty. Your children will never be hungry.⁷⁸⁷

⁵⁵⁵ That is, a war house, but more specifically it is your "count camp" first. The honor of killing an enemy and the three houses connected with first touching his dead body are always spoken of as "the four limbs of the body."

⁵⁵⁷ That is, wherever people give a Winter Feast. At this feast a deer, head and all, is served to the invited guests. The head may only be eaten by brave warriors.

²⁶² At the death of a chiefman an elaborate wake takes place. To this wake, as the principal participants, those of his warriors who have counted "camp" are always invited. It is believed that the souls of all the enemies one has killed become the slaves of the spirit and he may command them to do his bidding at any time. If the victor tells his exploit and then commands the enslaved soul to take care of the recently departed person in whose home the wake is being given, the soul of the conquered enemy will be of considerable aid in overcoming the obstacles that are supposed to hinder the path between this earth and the land of the spirits. These can not be overcome by the merits of the individual alone. If, however, a warrior becomes vain-glorious, the soul of the recently departed individual will fall into the abyss of the which surrounds one of the twenty earths through which he must pass. That is what is meant by "slandering."

⁷¹⁴ It must be remembered that the Winnebago believes that all that constitutes "life," "consciousness," continues to exist after death, the only difference being that in the former case an envelope, the body, is present and, in the latter case, it is not. Winnebago philosophy does not concern itself with what happens when a soul becomes "unconscious" of death, which would, of course, be the case with all those who do not die in battle, but it does insist that to him who dies on the warpath the moment of death does not even deprive of consciousness. He goes right on living, so if he were still an inhabitant of this earth, the only difference being that the corporeal envelope has fallen off his soul and that, although he sees and hears human beings, he himself is not visible nor his voice audible.⁷⁷⁵

867 My son, whenever people go on the warpath go along with them.
721 It is good to die on the warpath. You may perhaps say so, because
you are unhappy that your wife has left you. My son, not for such
reasons, however, must you go on the warpath. You will be merely
throwing away a human life. If you want to go on the warpath, do so
because you feel that you are courageous enough, not because you
are unhappy at the loss of your wife. If you go on the warpath you
will enjoy yourself. Do not go, however, unless you have fasted,
• [785] and unless you have fasted for that particular warpath. If you
have not fasted and attempt nevertheless to go on the warpath, a
bullet will surely seek you out and kill you. This is what will happen
to you if you do not fast.

[593 If you exert yourself in fasting you will assuredly perform some
604 brave war exploit. You must tell your sisters and sister's children
605 and your mother's sisters all about your exploit. Remember, also,
that the keepers of the war-bundles can give you good advice in
all that pertains to war. For their deeds they will be given a good
dish of meat." This they will give you to eat.

867 Of such things did my ancestors speak, and I would wish you to
do as they did. That is why I am telling you all these things. I
myself never asked for any of this instruction, but my father did.
All human beings ought to ask for it. Never let anybody be in a
position to puzzle you in regard to what is right. Ask for this
instruction, my son, for it is not an ordinary thing. In the olden
times if a person loved his child very much, he would only give him
instruction after he had begun fasting all day for the first time.
When a young boy has just matured, those who have been preaching
[881] to him always ask him one question, namely, whether he had begun
to fast. And this the young boy must always answer truthfully,
for if he has begun his fast the instruction would stop. The old
men do not preach to men, but only to boys.

881 (What follows is apparently an illustration of how a young man
887 asks his instructor for information of how to conduct himself in life.)
867 The young man will go to an old man and say, "Grandfather, I
would like to know how I am to conduct myself in life. Bless me
and if you can really give me any information, do so." Then the
old man was very thankful and said, "It is good; you speak cor-
rectly." Now the one who was asking something of the old man
had taken very good care of the old man's body and had led a good
life. He had no scars of any kind: that is, he had never done any-
thing shameful. The young man brought all sorts of food and placed
it in the lodge of the old man. Then he also brought him a fine
horse. Only then did he ask him again about the life that his
ancestors had led, and what kind of a life he ought to live. He asked

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him what the old people do when they give a child a name, and⁸⁸¹ what they say. All these things the old man told him. "It is good,"⁸⁸⁷ he said, "for you to know these things so that if anyone comes to⁸⁶⁷ you and asks you for information you will be able to tell them something and will not have to behave like a fool. If you are asked to give a little child a name, this little child will really be a means of increasing your power. That is why you ought to give a feast for it and smoke the child's tobacco. You must also give the child a name for his dog. Give him the name Yellow-Tree for a male dog. The name Yellow-Tree is given for the following reason. When the Thunderbirds strike at a tree it looks yellow. Just as leaves wither so do trees wither when the Thunderbirds strike them. They then begin to rot and become very much discolored. That is why they give a dog this name. If you ever have to give a dog-name for a female child call it She-Who-Stays-In-Her-Own-Place. This is all that I wish to tell you."

SYSTEM OF INSTRUCTION TO DAUGHTER

This is the way the old men used to speak to the little girls:

My daughter, as you go along the path of life, always listen to⁸⁶⁷ your parents. Do not permit your mother to work. Attend to⁵⁹³ your father's wants. All the work in the house belongs to you. Never be idle. Chop the wood, carry it home, look after the vegetables and gather them, and cook the food. When in the spring^[462] of the year you move back to your permanent settlements, plant your fields immediately. Never get lazy. Earthmaker created you^[221] for these tasks.

When you have your menses, do not ask those in your lodge to give you any food, but leave the lodge and fast and do not begin^[841] eating again until you return to your own lodge. Thus will you help yourself. If you always fast, when you marry, even if your husband had amounted to nothing before, he will become an excellent hunter. It will be on account of your fasting that he will have^[785] changed so much. You will never fail in anything and you will always be well and happy. If, on the contrary, you do not do as I tell you—that is, if you do not fast—when you marry he will become very weak, and this will be due to you. Finally he will get very sick.

My daughter, do not use medicine. If you marry a man and⁸⁶⁷ place medicine on his head he will become very weak and will not⁵⁹³ amount to anything. It may be that you do not want to have your⁸³² husband leave you and this may induce you to use medicine to keep him. Do not do that, however, for it is not good. You will be ruining a man. It is the same as killing him. Do not do it, for it is forbidden. If you marry a man and you want to be certain of always retaining him, work for him. With work you will always

RADIN SOCIAL ORGANIZATION—SPECIFIC CLANS

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In this lodge they claimed that prisoners were
 confined and certain tribal regalia deposited. The informants were
 not, however, at all clear about these facts, some even denying that
 there was a Warrior lodge and insisting that prisoners were confined
 in the Bear or Soldier lodge.

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According to one informant the Warrior and Bear clans could give
 each other orders that had to be obeyed.

The members of the Warrior clan claimed that all the members
 of the clan were warriors and did not have to fast in order to obtain
 the right of starting out on a war party. This was vigorously denied
 by the members of the other clans, who referred to this claim with
 derision. There seems, however, to be no reason for questioning the
 fact that the clan had a special lodge and that it was intimately
 connected with war functions. Exactly what these were it is quite
 impossible to state, as they have not been exercised for a very long
 time.

[785]

The first two clan songs are given on page 220. The clan facial
 decoration, used only at burial, and which were supposed to be
 marks of recognition in the spirit land, are as follows: A red line
 alternating with a black and another red line across the forehead,
 and a red line around the mouth. One informant claimed that only
 the three marks on the forehead were necessary, and that in times
 of war blood was used for the red marks (pl. 40).

[302]

According to an informant of the Thunderbird clan, the Warrior
 clan functions were as follows:

The Warrior clan's position in the tribe is that of general warrior. He can kill an
 enemy at any time without breaking any of the rules of the tribe. Every other
 clansman who wishes to go on the warpath must fast and be blessed by the spirits
 with specific blessings before he can do this.

[721]

There may have been a special feast associated with the Warrior
 clan, but the author never heard of it. The clan possessed a number
 of war bundles.

[778]

ORIGIN MYTH

(TOLD BY A MEMBER OF THE CLAN)

In the beginning, Earthmaker made four men. Then he sent
 them to the earth. Within Lake, there, they landed and they alit
 on the branch of a tree. There were four branches and each one alit
 on one branch. And then on the earth they jumped and started
 walking toward the east. There they erected a camping place.
 There they started the fire. It was the principal fire. Then they
 started to look for food, but they were unable to find any. So the
 second brother was sent, but he was not able to get any animal, but
 he brought a man. Because he brought it, for that reason, the first
 male child we have shall be called *He-who-enters-humana*. Then the
 second one, him whom they called the warrior, was sent. Thus it

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776 In the fall of the year in which the man said this the people, as
 787 usual, went out hunting and the man got lost and was forced to
 camp out in the wilderness overnight. So he built a fire and sat
 alongside of it. Suddenly he saw a man coming toward him. As
 soon as the stranger came up to him he took a seat on the opposite
 side of the fireplace. Then the stranger said, "I am the one whom
 you threatened to kick off this earth whenever you met him. You,
 furthermore, boasted that I could not kill you." Then he pointed
 his finger in a line with the man's heart. But the man remained
 seated near the fireplace without moving. Then he did this again,
 yet the man still remained in his former position. Then the third
 time he did it and said, "In the center of the heart." The man,
 however, remained seated just as before. Then the stranger
 exclaimed, "Who are you anyhow?" and pointed his finger at him.
 But the man did not move. Then the stranger (Disease-giver)
 pleaded with the man to die so that it might not be said that he had
 failed in the "mission" for which he had been created. He promised
 the man that if he would oblige him and die he could come back to
 earth again within four days. Finally the man consented. He
 went home and told his folks that he was going to a certain place to
 787 die for the space of four days and that they should, under no con-
 788 ditions, go to see him there, for in that case he would surely die.
 Then he dressed himself in his best clothes and went to the place
 where he was to meet Disease-giver. (He rested his head against a
 tree and died.) However, on the third day his wife could not resist
 the desire to see him, so she went to the place where her husband
 was leaning against the tree. Then he really died. After his death
 a red spot was visible upon his forehead.^a

METHODS OF BRINGING THE SPIRITS INTO RELATION WITH MAN

- 785 **Fasting.**—Fasting has been discussed before. There are two things
 to be remembered in connection with it—first, that it is a method of
 superinducing a religious feeling; and, secondly, that this religious
 feeling in turn is bound up with the desire for preserving and per-
 petuating socio-economic life values. Among the Winnebago the
 desirability of the conditions superinduced by fasting lay not so
 much in the emotional pleasure it gave, although this is not to be
 underestimated, as in the belief which the shamans had developed,
 that such a state was essential for placing people in a position
 enabling them to overcome certain crises in life, which it was reason-
 able to believe might take place.

787 **Mental concentration.**—To the religiously inclined Winnebago the
 153 efficacy of a blessing, of a ceremony, etc., depended upon what they

^a This is not supposed to be a myth but the real experience of a man named James Smith.

THE HERUCKA DANCE

535 The *Herucka* is a social dance and is frequently given when visitors
574 from other tribes are present, presents being given on this occasion.
Men and women take part in it and are generally dressed in their best
clothes. A few customs that were noticed at a performance in 1908
might be mentioned here.

If a man drops anything during the dance he himself may not pick
it up. Only a warrior who has been wounded has the right to do so.
The object dropped is returned to the owner, who, however, must
always give it to his sister or niece.

It is at times customary for a man to dress himself in rags and
beg for food, etc. He generally represents himself as an extremely
poor man and pictures his destitution in a manner best calculated to
amuse everyone.

[525] Wagers of horses are very commonly made at this dance.

[533] The dances indulged in are mainly victory dances and the songs
known as *Herucka* songs are always victory songs. Many hoerowed
songs are sung at this dance.

[534] A large drum is always used, around which sometimes as many as
10 drummers sit. The drum consists of an ordinary tub over which
skin has been tightly drawn. It is supported by two carved sticks,
to which it is firmly attached, so that the bottom is about a foot from
the ground. It is painted in the following manner: Two rather
narrow lines of paint across the center of the drum, one blue and the
other green. The portion of the drum next to the yellow line is
painted blue, and that next to the blue line red. No meanings for the
colors were obtained.

WATONAHK'EWK FEANT

(AFRAID-TO-EAT-GREENS FEANT)

241 Informant, member of Beaver clan: Just about roasting-ear month
785 people would commence to fast and continue until the green corn is
262 ripe enough to be eaten. They fast so that all the plants may
strengthen the tribe.

The fast generally takes place in a special lodge, from under which
all the grass has been cut, for the faster must not come in contact
with anything that is green. When the fasting is over a feast is
given at which all those present eat "greens" for the first time.

THE CAPTIVE'S DEATH DANCE

747 Before putting a captive to death it is customary to tie his arms
535 behind him in such a manner that his hands have a little freedom.
Then they put a gourd in his right hand and a lance in his left hand

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THE CLAN WAR-BUNDLE FRANTS

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annoyed it. Host, I greet you. You who are impersonating the spirits, all of you, do I greet."

THE THROWING OUT OF THE BUCKSKINS

Then the attendants give that war-bundle owner who is regarded as the foremost, as an expert, tobacco, for it is about time now that the various spirits should accept (the offerings).¹²² Therefore they select a man who is proficient, one who has very likely been blessed by the Night Spirits and one therefore to whom they are likely to listen, a holy person, a man who has attained war honors. He is likely to be the best one to make the spirits cognizant of the buckskins. So they brought the drum for him to his place, and placed tobacco in his hand. Then he spoke as follows:

Speech of prominent guest.—"Host and members of his clan who are seated here, I greet you. You seated in this lodge who are impersonating the spirits, I greet you. War-bundle owners who are seated here, I greet you. It is good that the war-bundle owners have done so much for the host. He has brought us the means of blessing and caused us to come into this lodge and has fed us. He has permitted us to offer tobacco. It is good. Not insincerely should we speak on such an occasion, our father told us. If at any time the spirits pay any attention to a human being and permit him to offer them moccasins, rest assured that they will not let a weakling do this. If you are of any importance the spirits will accept the moccasins you have offered them. Indeed, my son, our grandfathers on both ends of the earth will have knowledge of these offerings,¹²³ they told each other."

For the Night Spirits they sang and alternately they would start up a song for the Thunderbird as they sat there.

After finishing a Night Spirit song, then they would start up one for the Thunderbird, and then they would sing Night Spirit songs and Thunderbird songs together. "If at any time they consider you a man and accept the moccasins you have offered them, use your power. Above all, be careful that you do not say anything in a frivolous manner. The host putting himself in a pitiable condition has with copious dropping of tears besought the spirits for war power. For life he has also besought them and has prayed to them with offerings of tobacco, food, buckskins, and feathers. Putting himself in a pitiable condition he has hunted for the spirits,¹²⁴ weakened himself through exposure to cold, and caused himself untold sufferings. Oh that I could have done similarly! It is for this (these laudable rea-

¹²² I. e., that the buckskins should be placed where the spirits can get them.

¹²³ I. e., the Night Spirits living in the east and the Thunderbirds living in the west.

¹²⁴ I. e., hunted the deer that are used at the feast both for eating and for the buckskin offerings.

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[For information on fasting in relation to vision quests, see
category 787.]

Early Childhood

In the fall of the year we would pick cranberries. When the hunting season was open, I would begin to fast again.

This was my life for a number of years.

After a while we bought a pony on which we used to pack all our belongings whenever we moved our camp. In addition three of us would ride on top of the pack. Sometimes my mother and sometimes my father drove the pony.

After I had grown a little older and taller all of us brothers would fast together. My father would indeed repeatedly urge us to fast. "Do not be afraid of the burnt remains of the lodge center-pole," he would say to us. "Whatever are the true possessions of men, the apparel of men and the gift of doctoring—all these things that are spread out before you—do try and obtain one of them." * Thus he would speak to us.

I would then take a piece of charcoal, crush it and blacken my face and he would be very grateful to me.

I would at first break my fast at noon but then gradually I began to fast all night. From the fall of the year until spring I would fast until nightfall and then eat. After a while I trained myself to pass the night without eating and after that I was able to go two nights and days without taking any food. Then my mother went to the woods at some distance from the

* Symbolical manner of describing the crushed charcoal with which fasters must blacken their faces.

* By "possessions of men" he means mainly that knowledge which will make a man honored and respected in his community; and by "apparel of men," he means power and ability.

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§3. *Fasting*

*159 At this stage of life I secretly got the desire to make myself pleasing to the opposite sex.

[342] The Indians then lived in their old-fashioned lodges. Women, however, whenever they had their menses, [343] were placed in special huts. There the young men [841] would go to court them at night when their parents were asleep. I used to go along with the men on such occasions, for even although I did not enter any lodges but [159] merely accompanied the older men, I enjoyed it. [84] [584]

My parents were greatly in fear of my coming into contact with menstruating women so therefore I went with these men secretly. My parents were even afraid of having me cross the path over which a menstruating woman had passed. They worried so much about it at that time, because I was to fast as soon as autumn came. They did not wish me to be near menstruating women, for were I to grow up in their midst I would assuredly be weak and of little account. Such was their reason.

*159 Before long I started to fast again together with an older brother of mine, both day and night. It was [185] during the fall moving, and several lodges of people [221] were living near us. There it was that my elder brother and I fasted. Among the people of the other lodges [883] were four girls whose duty it was to carry wood.

Fasting

Whenever these girls went out to get wood my older brother and I would play around with them a great deal. We did this even although we were fasting at the time. Of course we had to do it in secret. Whenever our parents found out we got a scolding and so did the girls. At home we were warned to keep away from menstruating women, but we ourselves always sought them. 159* 785 • [86] [84]

After a while some of the people living in the lodges moved away and we were left alone. They moved far ahead of us. We ourselves were to move only a short distance at a time. My father and my brother-in-law went out hunting and killed seventy deer between them, so that we had plenty of meat. 159* [224]

When the girls with whom I used to play moved away I became very lonesome. In the evenings I used to cry. I longed for them greatly and they had moved far away!

Soon we got fairly well started on our way back. We moved to a place where all the leaders used to give their feasts. Near the place where we lived there were three lakes and a black-hawk's nest. Right near the tree where the nest was located, they built a lodge and our war-bundle¹⁰ was placed in it. There my elder [787]

¹⁰ The war-bundle was the most sacred object among the Winnebago. It consisted of dried animal skins, other parts of animals, reed flutes, etc., all of which had some symbolical meaning. The various animal remains, for instance, were supposed to give the owner the powers of these animals, the sound of the reed flutes was supposed to paralyze his enemy and make it impossible for him to walk. Each clan possessed at least one such bundle and whenever the tribe went on the warpath, this bundle was carried on the back of some 778 [825] [619]

Fasting

fering. I am Earthmaker and I bless you. You will never be in want of anything; you will be able to understand the languages of your neighbors; you will have a long life; indeed, with everything do I bless you." But, from the very first, this figure did not inspire Weshgishega with confidence and he thought to himself, "Somebody must be fooling me." And so it was; it was a bird. 159*
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Then most assuredly did he think that he wished to die for he felt that all the bad birds in the world were trying to make fun of him.

Earthmaker, above where he sits, knew of all this. He heard the man's voice and he said, "O Weshgishega, you are crying. I shall come to the earth for you. Your father has told me all." Then when Weshgishega looked, he saw a ray of light extending very distinctly from the sky down to the earth. To the camp it extended. "Weshgishega, you said that you wanted to see me. That, however, cannot be. But I am the ray of light. You have seen me."

Not with any war powers did Earthmaker bless him; only with life.

After telling me about Weshgishega, father left me. When I found myself alone I began to think that something ought to happen soon, yet nothing occurred so I had to pass another day there. On the third night I was still there. My father visited me again and we repeated what we had done on the night before. He told me about my grandfather Jobenangiwinxga: 159*
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[55]

My Ancestor Jobenangiwinxga

Once Jobenangiwinxga fasted. So that he might be blessed by the spirits he starved and thirsted himself to 159*
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[785]

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* 159 death; he made himself pitiable in their sight. At first
539 he fasted four nights and the Night Spirits came to him;
787 with mighty sounds they came. There they stood before
him and said, "Human being, you have thirsted yourself to
death and we are going to bless you for that reason. We
who speak are the Night Spirits." They blessed him with
life and with success on the warpath. Then he looked
at them and said to himself, "I wonder whether these really
are the Night Spirits speaking to me?" Then he looked at
them and he saw that they were small birds called hesheppa.
They had fooled him.

Then once again was his heart sore. In despair he said,
• [785] "Well, if I have to, I'll die fasting." So he fasted again
and once again he rubbed charcoal on his face. For six
nights he continued to fast. And then, once again, from
the east the Night Spirits came. They came making a
great noise and they stood near him and said, "Human being,
we bless you. You have thirsted yourself to death and you
have made your heart sore. We feel sad on your account.
With life and success on the warpath we bless you."
Then he looked at them and again he wondered in his
heart whether they really were the Night Spirits.¹² Indeed
they were not the Night Spirits who were speaking to him.
They were birds called the kawishge, choxjin and shikokkok.
They were fooling him. Instead of feeling sad this time,
however, he said, "I don't care what happens; I am willing
to die in order to get a blessing." So he thought to himself.
Then again he began fasting. He rubbed charcoal over

[776] ¹² The Night Spirits were mythical spirits whose precise nature
is never described in detail. They are supposed to cause darkness
and the night. They possess a cane with which they strike those
of their worshippers who are not properly attentive to their cere-
monies.

Fasting

his face again. Seven nights he fasted and once again from the east the Night Spirits came singing. They came and stood before him and said, "Nephew, we bless you. So long have you been sad and so piteously have you cried to us that we bless you. No one did we ever bless before. Both in war and in life you shall be able to do as you wish." Then again he looked in their direction and thought to himself, "I wonder whether those speaking are really the Night Spirits?" But indeed they were not the Night Spirits. They were the bluebird and the duck and as many as there were of them, their breasts were dark; as many as there were of them, they were bad. "O my! O my! How they abuse me," Johenangiwinxga cried.

He had at first thought in his fastings that just to spite the spirits he would fast again but now he rubbed charcoal on his face and wept bitterly. Both hands contained tobacco, and he stood in the direction from which the Night Spirits came and, weeping, put himself in the most abject condition.

Now indeed to its very depths did his heart ache. Ten nights did he fast. Finally the Night Spirits came after him. "Human being, I have come after you." He followed the spirits and they took him to the east; to the site of a Night Spirit village they took him. In the village there was a long lodge standing in the east. There they took him. All the Night Spirits in control of the most powerful blessings were there. When he entered he had to wade through white feathers up to his knees. Many kettles and much food did he see in the lodge. On the outside a buffalo hide was stretched almost across the entire lodge. Then these spirits said to him, "Human being, without giving up, long have you suffered; your heart has indeed been sad. All of the spirits in this lodge have talked about what is to

Fasting

Just then my older brother came home and they objected to his return for he had not been blessed. However, he took some food and ate it. 159* 787

My brother J., however, obtained a blessing. When he reached the age of puberty my father called him aside and told him to fast. He told him that it was his fervent wish that he should begin to fast in order to become holy, to become invincible and invulnerable in war. He wished him to become like one of those Winnebago of whom stories are told. He assured him that if he fasted he would really be holy and that nothing that exists on this earth would be able to molest him; that he would live a very long life and that he would be able to cure the sick. He told him that if he were blessed no one would dare to make fun of him and that they would be very careful how they addressed him; first, because they really respected him and secondly, because they were afraid of getting him angry. He was to fast until spring and then he was to stop, for there are many bad spirits about in the spring who are likely to deceive a faster. 159* 785 554 787 [576]

Near our village there was a hill called *Place-where-they-keep-weapons*. This hill was very high, steep and rocky. It was a very holy place. There it was that my father wished my brother to fast for it was the place where he himself had fasted. Within this hill lived the spirits whom we call *Those-who-cry-like-babies*. These spirits are supposed to possess arrows and bows. Twenty of them were supposed to be in this hill. My father had control of them and when 778 [776] 000

Fasting

although the feast was supposedly given in our honor, we were placed on one side of the main participants. After the kettles containing the food had been put on twice, it became daylight and the feast was over. 159*
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The following spring we moved to the Mississippi in order to trap. I was still fasting and ate only at night. My brothers used to flatter me, telling me that I was the cleverest of them all and, in consequence, I used to continue fasting although I was often very hungry. In spite of my desire to fast, however, I could not resist the temptation of being around the girls. I wanted always to be near them. They were generally in their menstrual lodges ¹² when I looked for them. My parents did not wish me to go near the girls then but I went nevertheless. [221]
[224]
[152]
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My parents told me that only those boys who had no connection with women would be blessed by the spirits. Throughout this time my sole wish was to appear great in the sight of the people. To be praised by my fellowmen was all I desired. And I certainly received what I sought. I stood high in their estimation. That the women might like me was another of the reasons why I wanted to fast. But as to being blessed, I learned nothing about it, although I went around with the air of one who had received many blessings and talked as such a one would talk. [865]

¹² Any contact with menstruating women, or even with objects in any way connected with them, will, it is the firm belief of the Winnebago, destroy the power of sacred objects or individuals temporarily sacred. Fasting youths were regarded as such. [841]
[178]
[185]

* 159 §4. *Reminiscences of Childhood*

● 1785 The following spring I stopped fasting.

501 In those days we used to travel in canoes. My
226 father used to spear fish and always took me along
593 with him, and this I enjoyed very much. He kept a
club in the canoe and after he had speared a fish, I
would kill it with the club as it was jumping around.
Sometimes my mother accompanied us. She sat in the
stern of the boat and rowed while my father stood in
the prow and speared the fish. I killed all those thrown
in the canoe.

[865] Sometimes my parents would start out without me,
but I would then cry so bitterly that I, in the long run,
induced them to take me along. Sometimes they
whipped me and told me to go home, but I would follow
them so far that they were then afraid to let me go
back alone and I would thus be permitted to ride with
them. Indeed I exerted myself greatly in crying and
as I cried, ran after them and followed them very far,
I was always taken along in the end.

[342] In those days we lived in the old-fashioned Indian
lodges. In winter our fire was placed in the center of
[354] the lodge and my father used to keep it burning all
night. When he placed a large log in the fire it would
burn a long time.

§7. *The Teachings of My Father*

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[867]

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My father used to keep up the old habit of teaching us the customs of the Winnebago. He would wake us up early in the morning and, seated around the fireplace, speak to us. The girls would be taught separately. Now this is what my father told me:

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● [885]

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My son, when you grow up, see to it that you are of some benefit to your fellowmen. There is only one way in which you can aid them and that is by fasting. Our grandfather, the Fire, he who stands at all times in the center of our dwelling, sends forth all kinds of blessings. Be sure that you make an attempt to obtain his.

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My son, do you remember to have our grandfathers, the war chiefs,¹⁴ bless you. See to it that they have compassion upon you. Then some day as you travel along the road of life, you will know what to do and encounter no obstacles. Without any effort will you then be able to gain the prize you desire. The honor will be yours to glory in, yours without exertion. All the disposable war-blessings belong to our grandfathers, the war-controllers, and if reverently you fast and thirst yourself to death, then these will be bestowed upon you. Yet if you do not wear out your feet in frequent journeyings to and fro, if you do not blacken your face with charcoal, it will be all for naught that you

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¹⁴ Symbolical name for all those spirits who were supposed to be in control of war powers.

The Teachings of My Father

inflict this suffering upon yourself. Not without constant effort are these blessings procurable. Try to have one of the spirits created by Earthmaker take pity on you. Whatever he says will come about. If you do not possess one of the spirits from whom to obtain strength and power, you will be of no consequence socially and those around you will show you little respect. Indeed they will jeer at you. 159*
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[626]

My son, it is not good to die in the village; in your homes. Above all, do not let women journey to the spirit land ahead of you. It is not done. To prevent this from happening do we speak to our sons and encourage them to fast. Some day in life you will find yourself traveling along a road filled with obstacles and then you will wish you had fasted. When such an event confronts you, that you may not find it necessary to reproach yourself, I counsel you to fast. If you have not obtained any knowledge from the spirits, why it may happen that some day, in later life, warriors will be returning from the warpath and as they distribute the war prizes to their sisters,¹⁸ your own sisters will stand there empty-handed envying the rest. But if you obtain blessings from the war-controllers, your sisters will be happy. How proud they will be to receive the prizes, to wear them, and to dance the victory dance! Your sisters too will be strengthened thereby and you will be content and happy. 159*
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Now all this it would be well for you to obtain. Try to 000

¹⁸ Among the Winnebago a man's sisters, especially his elder sisters, were very highly respected and all war prizes, such as wampum-belts, wampum necklaces, etc., were always given to them whenever a man returned from a successful war-party in which he had secured some honor. These war honors were of various kinds. The greatest was considered to be the feat of having struck the body of a dead enemy first. [562]
[721]

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you will never be in need of anything. Fast for the food you are to receive. If you fast frequently enough for these things then some day when your children ask for food they will be able to obtain a piece of deer meat without difficulty; they may indeed be able to obtain a piece of moose meat. It lies within your power to prevent your children from ever going hungry.

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Now again, my son, let me enjoin you. Do not abuse your wife. Women are sacred. If you make your wife suffer, then you will die in a short time. Our grandmother Earth is a woman, and in abusing your wife you are abusing her. Most certainly will you be abusing your grandmother if you act thus. Since after all it is she who is taking care of us, by your action you will be practically killing yourself.

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When you have your home, see to it that whomever enters your lodge obtain something to eat, no matter how little you yourself may have. Such food will be a source of death to you if withheld. If you are stingy about giving food, some one might kill you in consequence; some one may poison you. If you ever hear of a stranger passing through your country and you want to see him, prepare food for him and have him brought to you. In this manner you will be doing good and it is always good to do good, it is said.

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If you see a helpless old person, help him if you have anything at all. If you happen to possess a home take him there, and feed him, for he may suddenly make uncomplimentary remarks about you.¹⁸ You will be strengthened thereby. Or perhaps when he comes, he may bring with him under his arms a medicine bundle, something he cher-

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¹⁸ It is considered exceedingly bad form for a guest to admire anything in the house he is visiting.

The Teachings of My Father

ishes very much and which he will offer you. If it is a bulb-medicine keep it to protect your house. Your home will never then be molested by anything evil and nothing evil will enter your house. neither bad spirits, ghosts, disease, nor unhappiness. Now such will be your life if you do as I tell you. Witches will keep away from you. Thus by fasting will you benefit yourself and your fellowmen.

You know that Earthmaker created all the spirits, those that live above the earth, those who live on the earth, those who live under the earth, those who live in the water—all these he created and placed in control of powers. Even the minor spirits Earthmaker placed in control of something. In this fashion he created them and after that, he created us and because we were created last and no further powers were left, he could not put us in control of anything. Then, however, did Earthmaker create a weed and this he placed us in control of. He further told us that none of the spirits he had created would have the power to take this weed away from us without giving us something in exchange. He told us that if we offered him a pipeful of this weed, which we call tobacco, he too would grant us whatever we asked for. Now it so happened that all the spirits came to long for this weed as intensely as they longed for anything in creation and for that reason if, at any time, with tobacco in our hands we make our prayer to the spirits, they will take pity upon us and bestow upon us the blessings which Earthmaker gave them. Indeed so it is, for Earthmaker created it thus.

Fast, my son. If you are blessed by the spirits and then blow your breath upon people who are ill, they will become well. Thus will you help your fellowmen. If you can cure any of your fellowmen of disease, then you will be of even more than ordinary help to them. If you can draw dis-

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*[59] your wife is the only one to love, you have humbled yourself
[581] and she will be taken from you. You have likewise made
869 the woman suffer; you have made her unhappy. The whole
562 world will hear about it. No other woman will want to
593 marry you and you will have the reputation of being a
bad man.

[577] Now you may act in the following way: You see people
[021] starting on a warpath and you join them knowing that it
is an honor to die on the warpath. But you will join them
because you feel unhappy at your wife's flight. Now this
is not the proper way to act. You are throwing away your
life; you are causing the leader of the war-party to throw
away a life. If you want to go on the warpath, do not go
because your wife has been taken away from you, go
because you feel courageous enough to do so.

● [185] It is on the warpath that a man has fun! Do not go,
[026] however, unless you have fasted adequately. You must
fast for each specific warpath. If you do not and yet
join a war-party, then in the midst of the fight, a bullet
will come your way and kill you. That will happen because
you did not fast. If you have performed any deeds of
valor, recount them to your sisters and to your sister's
children. Those in charge of war-bundles are good to
listen to in such matters. Those to whom such people give
advice will eat an excellent dish; they will have the
[554] honor of sitting near a great warrior in the middle of the
lodge.

*[59] These are the things of which the old people spoke and
869 this also is the advice I give you. I myself never asked
590 for these things, but my father did. Your grandfather
did. He asked for the information relating to the manner
in which people are to behave. Never, when you are older,
should you allow yourself to get in the predicament of not

The Teachings of My Father

knowing what is the right thing to do. Ask for this instruction, my son. It is not a matter requiring a few moments; it is something that must be thoroughly learned. You, too, must learn it. 159*
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To a girl the following was told:

My daughter, as you travel along the path of life, listen to your parents. Do not let your mother work. Attend to the wants of your father. All the work in the house belongs to you. Do not shirk it. Chop wood, pack it; look after the gardens; gather the vegetables and cook them. When you come back to the village in the spring, plant your fields immediately. Never get lazy, for Earthmaker created you to do these things. 867
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My daughter, when you get your menses, do not ask those in the house to give you any food. Fast and do not eat until you get back to the family lodge. If you act thus, you will be fasting for your seat, for your position in life. You can only keep this seat by fasting. Then when you marry, even if your husband has been a good-for-nothing before, he will become a good hunter. You will have accomplished this for him. You will not fail in anything and you will be happy and contented. If, on the contrary, you do not do as I tell you, then when you marry, you will weaken your husband. After a while he will become sickly and it will be your fault. [841]
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It is not good to use medicine. If you marry a man and place medicine upon his head, you will weaken him and he will not amount to anything. It may happen that you do not want your husband to leave you and that after reflecting on the matter, you place some medicine on his head, to prevent him from leaving you. This is not good. You 867
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- * 159 wanted immediately to fight with those who protested.
828 Whenever a person tried to buy one of them, he would ask an extravagant price, and whenever a horse was caught in depredations and he was asked to pay damages, he threatened to shoot the people concerned. He was accustomed to go around barefooted with his gun, it was said. For all these reasons his brothers disliked
- [593] him and asked some Winnebago to shoot him. These brothers also told the Winnebago how it would be possible to kill him, for he belonged to that group of people who were regarded as invulnerable. It is said that
- [154] when he fasted, he had gone without food for a whole
- [185] winter; that he had not resumed eating until spring.
- [411] In order to kill him, a wooden knife was required. This should be painted red. Then he was to be stabbed. This was the only way of killing him.

Now we thought that with all this evidence against him, we would surely be acquitted.

[P. 164]